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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [UNSC](#)  
SUBJECT: KOSOVO AT UNSC: RUSSIANS ARGUE FOR DELAY LEADING  
TO MORE DELAY

Classified By: Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad for Reasons 1.4 b/d.

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. Ambassador Khalilzad suggested to Russian PermRep Churkin on May 4 that the just-concluded Security Council trip to Kosovo seems to have established a solid Council majority in favor of the Ahtisaari package leading to independence for Kosovo. The ambassador framed the Kosovo issue for Russia as how to work with the Ahtisaari concept of "supervised independence" to find a formulation that would be palatable to Moscow. Churkin replied that the majority of elected Council members wasn't sufficient and that independence for Kosovo is simply a Russian red line. Churkin said he feared that imposed independence for Kosovo could lead to Russia being compelled to recognize other breakaway regions and to a serious degeneration in U.S.-Russia relations. To Churkin's appeal to the USG and EU to convince Kosovo Albanians to show patience for substantially more time, Ambassador Khalilzad said the UN-NATO-EU-USG package of resources that now sustains Kosovo could not be held together indefinitely and that the Council is finally ready to bring the Kosovo question to closure. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) Russian PermRep Vitaly Churkin hosted Ambassador Khalilzad at a working lunch to discuss Kosovo on May 4. Other participants were, for Russia, Deputy PermRep Igor Shcherbak and Poloff Pavel Knyazev and, for USUN, Ambassador Wolff and Deputy Political Counselor.

¶3. (C) Ambassador Khalilzad, summarizing his impressions in the aftermath of the April 24-29 Security Council trip to Kosovo (with stops in Brussels, Belgrade, Pristina, and Vienna), said his conversations with other trip participants convinced him that a solid majority of Council members now favors the "supervised independence" recommendation of SYG Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari. The ambassador said that the lingering breach between Kosovo Serbs and Kosovo Albanians evident in meetings on the trip had gone a long way towards convincing most Council members that autonomy for Kosovo within Serbia was not the answer. Churkin agreed that Kosovo Albanians were unlikely to accept permanent autonomy within Serbia, and he allowed that a Council majority may favor independence. Dismissing both those factors, however, he said simply that, "the fact that the Albanians aren't prepared for autonomy should not stop us," and the fact that a majority of the Council members may favor independence, while of some interest, is ultimately irrelevant because "this is not a majority vote." (NOTE. This was the only reference to a possible veto that the Russian side made during the lunch. END NOTE.)

¶4. (C) Ambassador Churkin presented a vision for the immediate future of Kosovo that was largely a continuation of

the status quo, although he said that Russia would welcome European "creativity" in taking on administrative duties in place of UNMIK. He said "1244 is a perfect mandate" for the maintenance of security by NATO, adding that "we don't need another." He urged the USG and EU to use their influence with Kosovo Albanians to get them to show continued patience so that the Kosovo issue could be resolved at some future time when "things in Serbia will have calmed down" to the point where "Kosovo could resolve itself." He appealed for the USG and EU to impress on the Kosovo Albanians that "you can always go from autonomy to independence."

15. (C) Ambassador Khalilzad replied that autonomy is a logical non-starter because the individual pieces of the UN/NATO/EU/USG package that now holds Kosovo afloat would fall apart under any autonomy scheme. He told Churkin that Moscow should consider how to shape the process of "supervised independence" in a fashion that made it palatable and offered USG assistance in finding such an accommodation within the Ahtisaari package.

16. (C) Churkin said no reformulation of Ahtisaari would make it acceptable to Russia because "independence is a red line." The primary reason he gave for this is what he sees as the inevitable precedent Kosovo would set for "Abkhazia, Transnistria, Western Sahara, and more." He said Moscow would come under great pressure to recognize them all. Dismissing Kosovo-as-a-special-case language in the resolution "elements" paper Ambassador Khalilzad passed him, Churkin said, "if we do this thing in May, we'll be doing those things in June. You can say whatever you want, but people will think, 'why aren't we special too.'" He said he understands well the very dramatic recent history of Kosovo, but said that unfortunately that drama was not unique. Ambassador Wolff replied that we view the resolution of the Kosovo question as the last chapter in the dissolution of Yugoslavia, and that all these other trouble spots had absorbed the previous stages of that process without incident.

17. (C) The last repercussion Churkin alleged would flow from imposed independence for Kosovo is deterioration of U.S.-Russia relations. He urged the USG to recognize that the two countries had enough trouble just now.

18. (C) COMMENT. Although Churkin continued to hold to the hard line he has articulated for a long while on Kosovo, the past vitriol was clearly lacking. He ended the meeting by appealing for Russia and the U.S. to work very closely on Kosovo in the Council, beginning immediately as members consider a format for consideration of Belgium's Kosovo trip report.  
KHALILZAD